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Abraham Lincoln *and* New Constitutional Governments

By Bartow A. Ulrich
Appendix, Part III

LINCOLN AND GRANT ON THE JEW QUESTION IN THE CIVIL WAR

Original Orders of Expulsion and Revocation

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ABRAHAM LINCOLN 1865



Ulysses S. Grant



LINCOLN AND GRANT ON THE JEW QUESTION

Grant was now, early in February, 1862, in command of the undefined "District of West Tennessee," an advancement which followed his early victories. He was now fairly in the cotton country. Cotton buyers swarmed in his department. He was bitterly hostile to them, as to everybody else trying to make money out of the misfortunes of the country. They demoralized the army. Cotton was worth a dollar a pound in the North, a price which brought large profits—particularly when the seller had stolen it to begin with. Speculators could pay liberally for expeditions into the rebel lines to bring out this crop. Some officers—chiefly volunteers, as regulars had soldierly ideas on this subject—accumulated many thousands of dollars. They defended themselves, saying: "Why should not we take this profit, who are periling our lives for the country, rather than speculators, who are here solely from mercenary considerations?"

Grant disapproved the whole system, and thought that all cotton should be confiscated by the government, or else that the profit on it should go to the producer, and not to the middlemen. He put all possible hindrances in the way of speculators, and would have kept them wholly out of the army if he could. Every officer whom he suspected of dabbling in cotton was looked upon with disapprobation, and the surest passport to his esteem was to be proof against cotton-buyers and trade-permits from Washington. When asked to name honest and discreet Union men, to sell goods to the inhabitants in his department for their immediate needs and at a fair price, he replied:

"I will do no such thing. If I did, it would be charged in less than a week that I was a partner of every one of the persons trading under my authority."

Grant dealt with the fugitives who swarmed to his camp in an equally practical way. Through the large region which his southward march had thrown into the Union lines the staple crop of the South was yet standing in the fields. He issued an order directing that the contrabands be properly cared for, organized and "Set to work picking, ginning, and baling the cotton now ungathered. Suitable guards will be detailed to protect them from molestation. For further instructions, the officers in charge of these laborers will call at these headquarters."



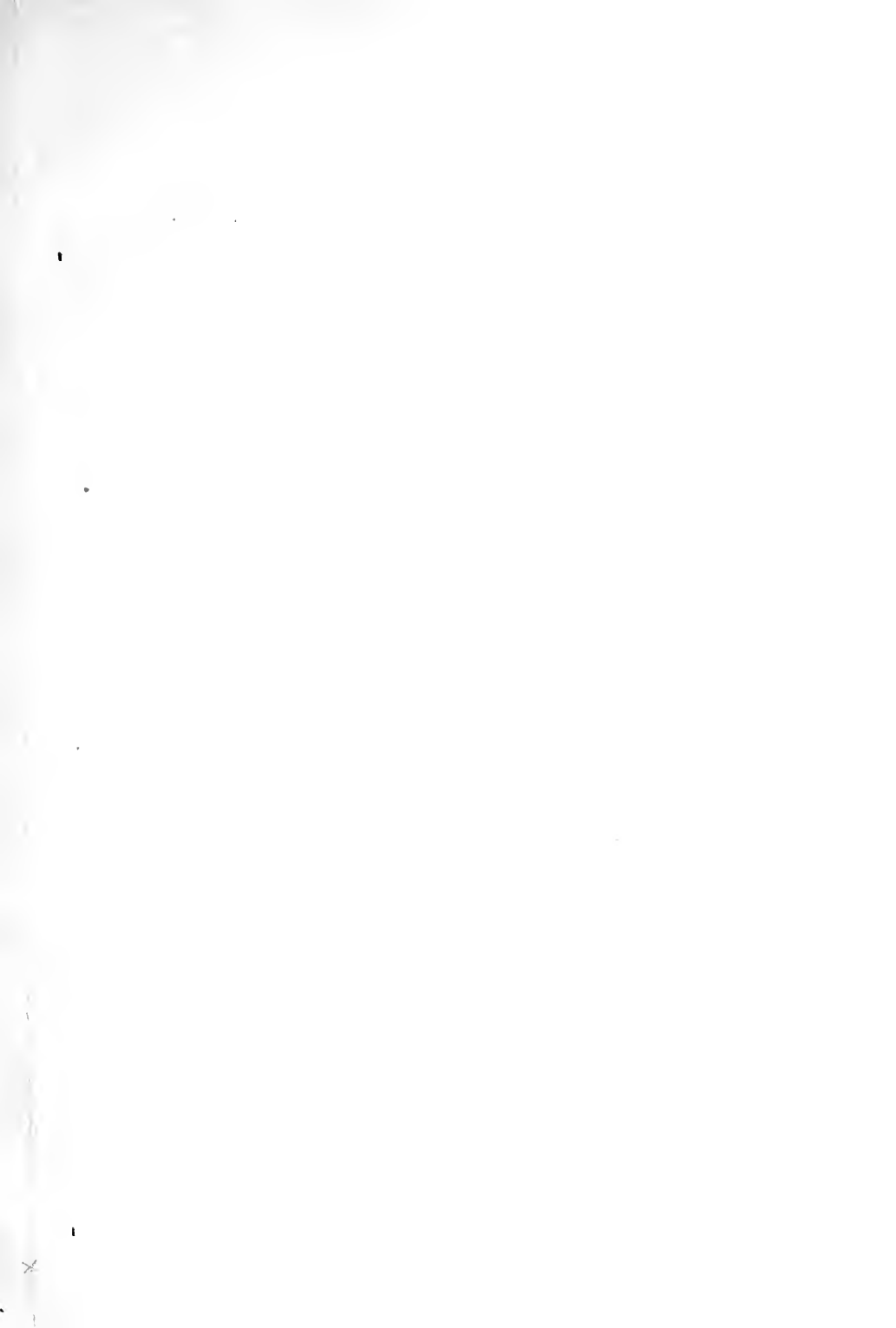
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As our lines advanced southward, the regulation of trade grew more perplexing. At Corinth, Grant had issued an order prohibiting the carrying of coin south of Cairo or Columbus, except for government purposes. It was at first countermanded by the U. S. Treasury Department. A few weeks later, however, that repentant authority not only confirmed it, but extended it over all the rebel territory which had fallen into federal hands. To enforce it, and also to keep information from the enemy, as military movements of the utmost importance were beginning, Grant ordered that persons going south from Columbus and Memphis should be satisfactorily vouched for and their persons searched.

At both places traders were detected trying to get through with gold, and also to smuggle quinine, groceries, clothing and boots and shoes as well as cotton. These offenders and most of the cotton-buyers were Jews. The department swarmed with them. The long dining-room of the principal hotel at Memphis "looked at meal-times like a Feast of the Passover," said one correspondent.

With headquarters at Oxford, Colonel Dubois, commanding at Holly Springs, twenty-five miles north, found these people so troublesome that he issued an order expelling "vagrants and Jews" from his district. When Grant received it he said:

"This is manifestly unjust. We cannot exclude any whole class or any religious denomination as such."

Thereupon he countermanded the order. But a few days later, one of his relatives arrived from Holly Springs and secured passes to the front for himself and "a friend." The friend proved to be "a cotton buyer of Israel." Grant was excessively angered, especially as that day's mail brought a batch of letters, some anonymous and others signed by the writers, which Halleck had referred to him, and which represented that Jew speculators had full sway in his department. Grant instantly issued this order:

"The Jews as a class, violating every regulation of trade, established by the Treasury Department, also department orders, are hereby expelled from the department within twenty-four hours from the receipt of this order by post commanders. They will see that all this class of people are furnished with passes and required to leave, and anyone returning after such notification will be arrested and held in confinement until an opportunity occurs of sending them out as prisoners, unless furnished with permits from these headquarters. No passes will be given these people to visit headquarters for the purpose of making personal application for trade-permits."

When he handed it to his Adjutant-General, John A. Rawlins, for promulgation, that staff officer said:

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"General, you countermanded such an order two weeks ago."

"Well," replied General Grant, "they can countermand this from Washington if they like, but we will issue it anyway."

Representations of the injustice of the order at once flooded the desks of the President and Congressmen of both houses in Washington. In particular, the partisan opponents of the Administration, and the censorious elements of national politics then designated as "Copperheads"—at that time confined to the ranks of the Democrats—rose to their opportunity to point out the inconsistencies of the existing rule in discriminating against a religion and a race. The Constitution was being "violated by this extreme act on the part of the military commander." General Grant heard from President Lincoln, and for the first and only time in their relations a controversy loomed up between them.

Elihu Washburne, Grant's neighbor of Galena and Congressman from Illinois, became the national mediator between the President as Commander-in-Chief of the Army, and Brigadier-General Grant, in command of the Army of West Tennessee. Congressman Pendleton of Ohio led the assault of the opposition, backed in his position by a delegation of speculators from his chief city of Cincinnati, who were most persistent and hostile to the man Grant. Even the latter's superior in command, Major-General Halleck, gave him "the cold shoulder" when he (Grant) suggested in an official communication that "All fraudulent contractors be impressed into the ranks; or, still better, into gunboat service, where they could have no chance of deserting."

Washburne said: "This resolution censures one of our best generals without a hearing, and I move that it be laid on the table."

This was carried by a vote of sixty-three to fifty-six.

The Pendleton attack in Congress came in the form of a resolution denouncing Order No. 12, promulgated by Brigadier-General Grant as commander of the Department of West Tennessee, as "illegal, unjust, tyrannical and cruel, and deserving the sternest condemnation." In the Senate, Powell of Kentucky introduced a like resolution using the words "atrocious, illegal, inhuman and monstrous order." A long debate followed, with Clark of New Hampshire, Wilson of Massachusetts and Washburne of Illinois defending Grant.

Said Clark: "I do not believe it wise to condemn unheard the brave General Grant when he and his soldiers are struggling in the field to put the rebellion down."

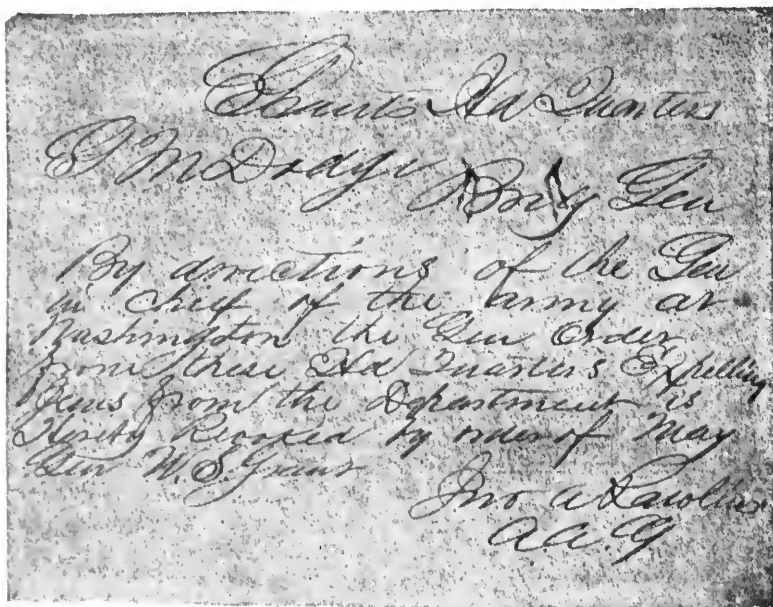
Wilson said: "I dare say that the rules and regulations of the army were interfered with in General Grant's department by per-

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sons calling themselves Jews who ought to have been excluded."

The matter only came to a rest when President Lincoln, as Commander-in-Chief of the whole army, after his diplomatic and political consideration of the issue as a Jewish question, issued and sent to Grant the following order:

"ORDER NO. 12"



Quarters Ad Quarters
O. M. Dray
By directions of the Gen
in Chief of the Army at
Washington the Gen Order
from the Ad Quarters is
hereby Revoked by order of May
Gen W. S. Grant
Jno A. Rawlins
A.A.G.

Grant read the communication from Lincoln while standing before his tent in his favorite position, one hand in pocket and a cigar in his mouth, and handed it without a word to his adjutant-general for general promulgation; then looked with longing eyes toward Vicksburg.

Original order of revocation, long held sequestered in the famous Gunther collection, now in possession of the Chicago Historical Society. Verification by E. E. Wood, field secretary.

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The Mississippi, having been cleared from Cairo to Island Number Ten by the National gunboats co-operating with the land forces, Pope, Memphis was permanently occupied, and the arrangements for the advance into Central Mississippi and for the capture of Vicksburg gradually took shape.

It was during this period that Grant issued his drastic order expelling all Jews from the limits of his command, but it is worthy of note that this was done against the advice of Rawlins, who pointed out its objectionable features and called attention to the fact that only two weeks before a similar order issued by one of his post commanders had been countermanded. Grant, who was perhaps unduly incensed by the fact that his own father was interested at the time in carrying on trade within the limits of his department, said with unusual firmness: "Well, they can countermand this from Washington, if they like; but we will issue it anyhow." Great excitement was aroused by it throughout the country. The newspapers denounced it in unmeasured terms. Congress took notice of it and a long debate followed, but the ever-watchful Washburne headed off a vote of censure by a motion to lay the subject on the table, which was carried. Meanwhile the President, in the exercise of his own prerogative as Commander-in-Chief, countermanded the order, but without expressing any direct censure of Grant. It may be assumed, however, that the incident did not strengthen Grant either with the administration or with Congress, but rather tended to prolong the suspension of judgment which had previously shown itself in reference to him.—From *Life of Major-General John A. Rawlins*, by Major-General James Harrison Wilson (the Neale Publishing Company, New York).

"AN AWFUL NUISANCE"

Mr. W. A. Burnap, Fergus Falls, Minn., makes the following statement:

"Was first sergeant, Company I, Second Iowa Cavalry, Civil War. Attached to Cavalry Corps Headquarters under Brigadier General B. H. Pearson, who made raid to Baton Rouge under order of General Grant to divert the attention of the enemy from the siege of Vicksburg.

"Speculators—not all Jews—had come in to secure cotton (to trade in cotton) and I apprehend that the Jews were the fellows who would speculate in this business. Any quantity of cotton was hidden in the various swamps, and these speculators not only disturbed war

